

GRIFFITH CITY COUNCIL



Home Owners

Pressure Sewer Manual

It is strongly recommended that you read this manual and thereafter keep it in a safe, but readily accessible place. You should re-familiarise yourself with it each year. If the property is rented then the manual should be provided to the tenant along with instructions for them to familiarise themselves with the document. This document is available on the Council website.

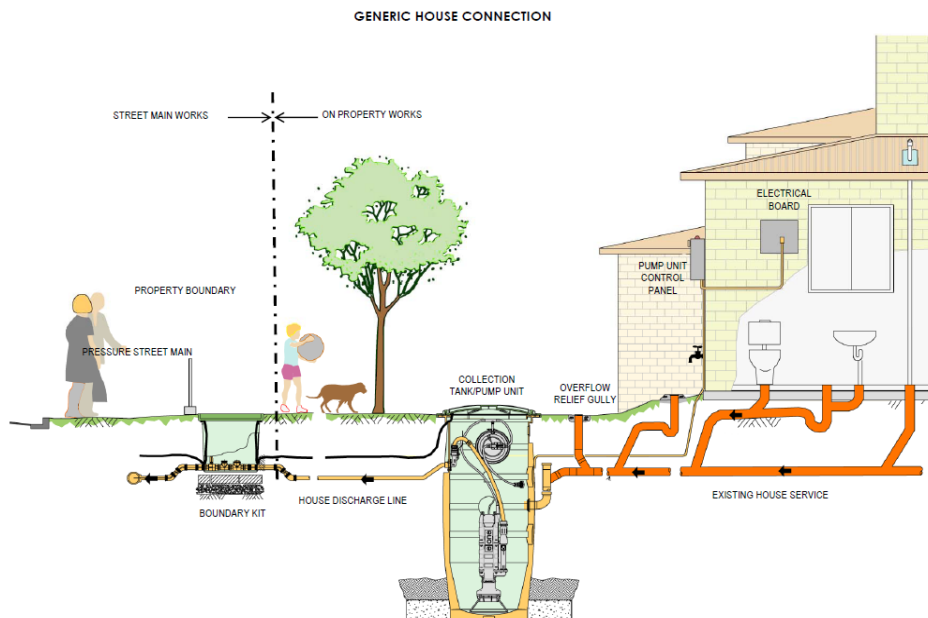
1 INTRODUCTION

This manual has been put together to assist you on how to operate your pressure sewerage system, what to do if things go wrong and what not to do.

Your property's sewerage service is provided by a Pressure Sewerage System. A typical system is shown below.

These systems have been in operation for around 10 years within the Griffith City Council area and should require little more thought or effort on the part of the resident than for a more conventional sewer system, excepting that the resident is required to contact Council if the alarm sounds.

2 COMPONENTS OF THE SYSTEM



The pressure sewerage system shown above essentially comprises of 4 main elements:

- A property boundary kit
- A pump unit, including grinder pump and collection tank
- An alarm panel
- A property discharge line

2.1 Property boundary kit

Under no circumstances should you attempt to operate the valve within the property boundary kit located at the front of the property. Griffith City Council will operate this valve when required.

2.2 Pump unit

The pump unit consist of a small tank placed on your property, a small grinder pump to break solids and allow them to be pumped through the property discharge line and a mechanical and electrical system to coordinate the operation of your system. The collection tank is buried within your property, but the top needs to protrude from the ground. This will facilitate repairs and service particularly if an emergency response is required. ***The collection tank lid is not to be buried and must be accessible at all times.*** Burying the lid may lead to system failures.

2.3 Electrical alarm panel

Power to the pump unit is provided from your electrical distribution box. The operation of the grinder pump is alarmed by the electrical alarm panel. The electrical alarm panel also provides an audible and visual alarm to give you adequate warning that the pump needs to be serviced. ***Under no circumstances is the alarm panel to be accessed, obstructed, moved or removed by the property owner.***



2.4 Property discharge line

The property discharge line connects the property boundary kit to the pump unit. This line is used to discharge the sewage off the property.

2.5 Maintenance to customer's plumbing system

Under no circumstance should a customer or their contractor undertake any maintenance works within 1 metre of the collection tank or associated works. For further information, customers should contact Griffith City Council on the numbers given below.

3. EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

For repairs to your pump unit and house discharge from the pump unit, Griffith City Council should be contacted on **the following numbers;-**

Time	Contact N°
Monday to Friday 8:30am – 5:00pm	6962 8100
Outside Business Hours	6964 0886

If an issue arises with the operation of the unit and there is a need to contact Council, the caller should describe the problem to the Customer Contact Officer who will then ascertain the best course of action. Griffith City Council is committed to respond to emergency calls within 1 hour during business hours and 2 hours outside of business hours.

When you are speaking to the Service Operator you need to confirm if there is an urgent need for the repairs to be carried out immediately. The normal method of repairs is to carry out next day servicing to:-

- Minimise the inconvenience to the residents and their neighbours;
- Minimise any potential damage to the householder's property (particularly the landscaping) by carrying out servicing during daylight hours;
- Contains servicing costs by avoiding after hours call outs;

4 WHAT TO DO IF THE ALARM SOUNDS

If the pump unit alarm sounds, you should take the following steps:



Alarm Panel



Silence Button

4.1 Turning off the audible alarm

Turn off the audible alarm by pressing the silence button on the alarm panel. This audible alarm has a time switch and will only operate for approximately 10 minutes. You cannot turn off the red light. It will turn off when the fault is cleared and the pump unit is functioning correctly, or the pump lowers the water level in the tank to below the alarm set point. If the red light has been activated for more than 1 hour, contact Griffith City Council on the numbers given in part 3 and report that the alarm has been activated.

4.2 Power failures and blackouts

If the alarm sounds immediately after a power failure, wait for one hour after power has been restored before calling Griffith City Council. (The alarm can be silenced in accordance with 4.1 above). The alarm may sound when the

power is restored simply due to the fact that the sewage has built up to a high level and there has been no pumping during the blackout.

You are advised to minimise wastewater flows (refer to 4.4) during and immediately after power failures to allow the system to clear.

4.3 Floods and Storms

During a flood or storm event, the customer is not required to make any alteration to the normal operation of the pressure sewer unit. In the event that the collection tank is inundated with stormwater, the pump alarm may activate, however, this should clear within a short period of time after a storm event when the alarm should reset. The customer is requested to contact Griffith City Council on the numbers given in part 3 if the alarm does not reset itself within 1 hour.

4.4 Minimising wastewater

You can minimise wastewater when the alarm is on by:

- Keeping showers to a minimum.
- After taking a bath, leaving the plug in or bucket out the water onto the lawn.
- Switch off any drainage (automated or not) from swimming pools and spas.
- Practice good water savings techniques such as not leaving taps running.
- Do not use washing machines.
- Do not use automated dishwashers.

Minimising wastewater generation does not mean you cannot use the system. Toilets can still be flushed and normal cooking can proceed.

4.5 Frequent sounding alarms

If you notice that the alarm sounds frequently and then turns off and **investigate**. Determine if there is any;-

- Sewerage coming from the Overflow Relief Gully. (An inspection opening just upstream of the pumping unit.);
- Discharge coming from the ground around the tank lid?
- Perceptible odour problems?
- Power failure and have you waited the suggested 1 hour before calling;
- Unusual pump noises?
- Sudden household discharge;
- Heavy rainfall event;

If the frequent alarms continue you are asked to report this to Griffith City Council on the numbers given in part 3. In the meantime keep using the unit as normal and switch off the audible alarm when it occurs. The light will go off when there is no longer an alarm condition.

5 THE GOLDEN RULES

There are a few golden rules pertaining to the operation of the pressure sewerage systems that you need to be aware of, and comply with at all times. These are:

1. **Do not attempt to repair the unit yourself.** Griffith City Council is maintaining your unit on your behalf (as part of your sewer rates). Your actions may void the warranties attached to the system.
2. **Do not take off the lid or enter the pumping unit** The inside of the pumping unit represents a confined space working environment that could be lethal.
3. **Do not discharge any of the prohibited substances set out below into the pressure sewerage system**
4. **Do not connect your roof or yard drains into to the pressure sewerage system.** The pressure sewer system is not designed to accommodate stormwater flows.
5. **When going on holidays, flush the pressure sewerage system.**
6. **If evacuating in an emergency, turn off all power, including the power to the pumping unit.**
7. **When in doubt about your pressure sewerage system, ask Council.**

6 REPAIRS TO THE SYSTEM

Griffith City Council will arrange for the repairs to all parts of the pressure sewer system. All repairs to the pump unit and property discharge line are usually the responsibility of the Griffith City Council. Repairs on the owner's plumbing upstream from Inspection Point upstream of the entry to the pump unit and nominally within 1 metre of the tank are at the owner's expense, as for any other form of sewerage system.

6.1 Access

You must ensure that Griffith City Council has 24 hours access to the pump unit, alarm panel and boundary kit and associated infrastructure. This means that the resident should ensure that pets can be contained, gates are accessible and there is unrestricted access to the tank/pump and the alarm panel. Should Griffith City Council make arrangements with the resident/property owner to access the property, however, on arrival, access to

the system cannot be achieved, Griffith City Council reserves the right to charge a service call.

6.2 Warranty and repair costs

Maintenance of the system is at no additional cost to you. The exceptions to this may be if you have:

- Discharged matter into the pump unit that you have been advised not to (refer to part 7 below)
- Accessed the pump unit – i.e. either the collection tank or the alarm panel.
- Interfered with the property service line or property boundary assembly.
- Sealed off the venting to the unit.
- Moved/relocated the alarm panel.

6.3 Burst pipes



If the property service line from the pump unit bursts (this will become evident by wet ground or water eruptions from the ground), you should immediately contact Griffith City Council on the numbers given in part 3 and turn off the power to the pump, this is achieved by turning the switch (circuit breaker) off in your main electrical distribution box. You should then minimise wastewater generation as previously suggested (refer to 4.4).

6.4 Wet areas around the tank

If you notice that the ground immediately around the pumping unit is wet, you should contact Griffith City Council on the numbers given in part 3 and have them inspect the site. You should then minimise wastewater as previously suggested (refer to 4.4).

6.5 The alarm is activated when you are not at home

It is advisable to notify your neighbours of the location of your new unit and its alarm/alarm panel, so that if your alarm is activated when you are not home, they can contact Griffith City Council on the numbers given in part 3 who will inspect the property.

7 WASTE NOT TO BE DISCHARGED INTO THE SEWER

Certain substances are not to be discharged into this or any other household sewerage system under any circumstances. To do so may result in a blockage of the property service line.

These include:

- **Cooking oil and fats**
- **Glass**
- **Metal**
- **Seafood Shells**
- **Rocks**
- **Nappies, socks, rags or clothes**
- **Chemicals***
- **Storm Water**
- **Plastic or wooden objects**
- **Paints (water and oil based)**
- **Sanitary napkins or tampons**
- **Kitty litter**
- **Flammable materials**
- **Lubricating oil and/or grease**
- **Petrol, diesel**
- **Salt water (sea water)**

* Other than those used in normal domestic products such as dishwashing powder, detergents & hair dyes.



As with any waste water treatment system that discharges to the environment, Griffith City Council encourages the use of low sodium and low phosphorus products to minimise the impact that these chemicals have on the environment such as algal blooms and salinity.

If you are in any doubt about any substances entering the sewerage system you should call Griffith City Council on the numbers given in part 3.

8 SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

8.1 Entry to collection tanks

Customers are warned that they **must never** access any of Griffith City Council's assets on their property including the collection tank and the property boundary kit.

There is no need for the resident to enter the system. Should Griffith City Council believe that access has been gained then the customer may receive a written warning from Griffith City Council and may also attract an administration fee.

8.2 Overflow Relief Gully

It is recommended, as with conventional gravity sewerage systems, that the overflow relief gully is kept clear at all times to ensure that if a blockage causes a backflow, sewage will not enter the dwelling through internal fixtures (refer Diagram in part 2).

8.3 Unoccupied house

In a situation where the home will be unoccupied for more than one week, the pump unit will need to be flushed out as this will ensure that it does not become a source of odours. It is suggested that:

- You run about 50 Litres of clean water into the pump unit until the pump activates and runs for about 1 minute (typically this can be achieved by running the water into the bathtub and then releasing it into the sewerage system). After that time, turn off the water and allow the pump to run until it shuts off automatically.
- It is preferred that the power to the pump unit is ***not*** switched off, however, if you wish to turn the power off, it is recommended that water supply to the house is also turned off at the stop tap to avoid the risk of collection tank overflow. Customers should note that if the power is turned off to the pump, the alarm will not operate and if an alarm condition arises, a sewage overflow may occur. Council will not be liable for any costs or other actions in the case where the electricity supply to the unit has been intentionally interrupted by the owner and/or occupier.
- Where Council receives a foul odour complaint arising out of a customer's failure to flush the unit prior to an extended absence from the property, it may choose to recover costs from the resident to carry out work to mitigate the nuisance.

8.4 Council Access to the Pressure Sewer Equipment

The minimal requirements for access by Council repair service people are set out in section 6.1. However, some key aspects in respect to access that need to be noted are:

1. The unit is not to be buried, paved, concreted over nor permanently covered with any material
2. When the Council repair agent comes to repair the unit, it must be accessible. If Council officers are unable to locate the unit because it has been covered, Council may refuse to carry out repairs until the owner exposes the unit and Council may apply a service charge to the resident.

At minimum, Council may pass any costs on to the resident for it to locate and uncover the pumping unit and it may choose to impose the fines for this covering of the asset under section 635 of the Local Government Act (1993).

3. If pets are not secured, Council officers may refuse to enter the property and carry out any repair works. In this instance Council will not be held liable for any repairs unable to be carried out and it may elect to apply a service charge.

4. Access to the pumping unit for a trolley/lifting device will be required. The officer will need to place a lifting frame above the pumping station to lift out the pump and then carry the pumps away to their vehicle requiring a path for the trolley. Any resident that closes off access may be responsible for any additional costs incurred including additional equipment, such as cranes etc. Council will not be held to next day responses in these instances.
5. Residents with properties that have restricted access must be present to allow Council service staff access to the pump unit and alarm panel at the agreed time.

8.5 Council not liable

Council will not be held liable for any overflows that may occur on the property where the resident has failed to notify Council. Residents will be liable for any flows that discharge from their property and may be prosecuted for environmental breaches if they have failed to notify Council. A record of all notifications will be maintained by Council.